

"Unelbow'd by a Flatt'rer, Pimp, or Play'r."—POPE.

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TO THE
FREE AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS
OF THE
CITY AND LIBERTIES OF WESTMINSTER.
LETTER VI.

GENTLEMEN;

To the letter, which I now have the honour to address to you, upon the subject promised in my last (p. 66), I have chosen for my motto a verse from a writer, who, to profundity of thought and brilliancy of genius united virtue incorruptible; and who, though the reflection is painful, is almost the only poet, ancient or modern, who never prostituted his pen to the flattering of princes or ministers, and whose memory, for that sole reason, has been basely calumniated by benefice-hunting, or pensioned, critics. In the wise and just mind of this our celebrated countryman, you see, gentlemen, in what degree of estimation play-actors stood. What, then, would this writer, who was so indignant at seeing such persons admitted to any share of familiarity with men of rank; what would he have said; where would even his eloquence have found terms adequate to the expressing of that indignation, that shame for his country, which he must have felt at seeing the play-actors of Westminster assuming a sort of corporate and political capacity; standing forward in a body to join the body of the nobility and that of the clergy; with them co-operating to stifle your voice; and, finally, inviting, in the manner of other corporate bodies, a member of parliament to a feast, given by them in celebration of his and their political triumph?

Upon the meanness of Mr Sheridan's accepting of a feast at such hands I shall say nothing; and the only use I shall make of the fact, that this drunken feast was given upon a Sunday, is, to draw your attention, for a moment, to the professions upon which these and others of our enemies ground their claim of preference to us. We are, by them, represented as men who wish to destroy all order, regular government, and religion; and this they have the audacity to urge against us in the face of all their profligacy, public and private, political and moral. While they are violating every law, human and divine; while their example is an encourage-

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ment to those who are already wicked, and is sowing the seeds of wickedness in minds hitherto free from guilt; while they are, to use the words of Churchill, "daring damnation face to face," they have the unbearable insolence to accuse us of a desire to overturn "every thing honourable and sacred." And, gentlemen, we should always bear in mind, that, as against us, there has been a cordial union between the profligate and the hypocrite; and that, while the latter has been even bribing and suborning in order to obtain the means of punishing the petty vicious, he has been giving his voice, heard in an oath before God, for the purpose of rendering triumphant great and notorious vice. The truth is, however, that this combination is by no means unnatural. The hypocrite and the profligate, though pursuing different courses, have, in all political matters, the same purpose in view, namely, to live upon the fruit of the labour of the people; and, therefore, against us they naturally combine.

Our enemies, enemies with whom we must remain at war until we have trampled them under our feet; those enemies, in answer to all our complaints, briefly refer us to *the law*. Well, then, that law which has afforded such ample protection to them; that law which makes Richard Brinsley Sheridan "Right Honourable;" that law which compels us to pay, out of the fruit of our labour, more than ten thousand pounds a year to the elder and the younger Sheridan, while the former openly declares, that he is ready to assist in making us yield up "even the necessities of life;" that same law, or code of laws, denominate play-actors, *vagabonds*; and, shall we be called *illiberal*? Shall we, by cant like this, calculated for the sole purpose of silencing the voice of truth; shall we, by this despicable cant, be deterred from appealing, in our defence, to that law which our enemies never fail to plead against us? In such society, in the midst of a drunken feast, and upon the Sabbath day, to prevent the *people* from profaning which so many severe laws have been passed, and which laws are now so rigidly executed; such was, you will agree with me, Gentlemen, a very suitable occasion for the Sheridans to boast

of their *high-blood*. And, here, before I proceed to any remarks upon these disgusting boasts, I beg leave to remind you of certain expressions in the last Election Letter of the elder Sheridan. In that letter he says: "as to Mr. Cobbett, believe me, there can be no use in continuing to detect and expose the gross and *scurrilous* untruths, which his *nature*, his *habits*, and his *cause*, compel him to deal in." To you, Gentlemen, it is unnecessary for me to say, that, as far, at least, as related to the cause, in which we were engaged, falsehood was not needed, and that, in fact, I had recourse to none; and, while I leave you to determine, whether my "*nature and habits*" compel me to deal in falsehood, I trust you will indulge me for a few minutes while I expose the pretensions to superiority in *nature* and in *habits*, put forward by this "*Right Honourable*" Gentleman. He told the play-actors, who, by-the-by, were amongst the very lowest even of that tribe, that he had *royal* blood flowing in his veins: "that he has," said Munden, in a whisper to Matthews, "for the only time I ever saw his father he was *king of Denmark*." Munden was right so far; but, I by no means pretend to say, that, considering how numerous, according to all account, the kings of Ireland formerly were, the Sheridans may not have been descended, in one way or another from some of them. You shall never meet with an Irish soldier, who cannot very easily trace his birth downwards from a royal house; but, because it is possible; because there is some old story going, that the Sheridan's ancestors were, in old time, at the head of some little band of bog-trotting savages, shall we seriously be told, that the present Sheridans are of royal descent? When king Bull-Dog, or King Corn-Planter, from the back woods of America, come down to the Atlantic cities and strut along the streets, their heads decorated with feathers and a dozen or two of tawny painted subjects trailing at their heels, stopping at now and then a door to beg a bit of bread, their self-important airs are the subject of universal ridicule; yet, there is in their conduct nothing half so ridiculous and contemptible as this boast of the Sheridans, surrounded by their mimic crew at the Theatre Coffee-house. If, as I once before observed, there be any calling lower than all other callings; if there be any one beyond all comparison the most degrading, it is surely that, wherein the operator, for the purpose of obtaining food and raiment, exhibits his person, displays his limbs, and strains his voice for the amusement of the spectators,

to whose occasional, and often capricious, hissings and peltings it is a part of his profession to submit with a smile and a bow. These, however, appear to have been the very circumstances, which served to cement the Sheridans and the play-actors. Sympathy is generally much more powerful than simple compassion; and, though the hissings and peltings, which the elder Sheridan had endured, during the election, were calculated to excite compassion in bosoms not trained and disciplined to the entertaining of that feeling, yet, I much question, whether the feast of the play-actors would ever have taken place, had not the hosts, each of whom would run into a river or a fire at the hiss of a gander or the sight of an orange-peel, felt, from the bottom of their hearts, that the cause of Mr. Sheridan was their own.—To return to the boast of royal blood: from what ancestors Mr. Sheridan's father might have sprung I shall leave to be discovered by those, who, like Mr. Chalmers, delight in painful and useless searches into obscurity; nor, as I will freely confess, should I be at all surprized, if the inquiry, heartily undertaken by some such laborious person, were to lead to a discovery, that our hero actually is descended from some sovereign, whose dominion bore a resemblance to that of a king of the Gipseys. But, in the mean while, you, Gentlemen, as well as I, have before you this simple and undeniable fact, *that Mr. Sheridan's father was a play-actor*; a play-actor, too, not like the Kembles, whose rare endowments and whose excellent characters serve to screen from universal contempt a profession, the followers of which hate and envy them in return; not a play-actor of this description; but a play-actor of the lowest, of the very lowest cast, of a cast not less low, and that is saying much, than any one of the hosts of the dinner, given in honour of his son. Whence his mother sprang it would be useless to attempt to ascertain; but, when Mr. Sheridan, the accomplished, the liberal, the "*gentlemanly*," the high-blooded Mr. Sheridan, in a public letter, sent to be published by him from all the daily presses, thinks it decorous to assert, that my *nature* and my *habits* compel me to deal in vulgar falsehoods, I am sure, gentlemen, that you will not think the question misplaced, if I ask him, whether my habits, contracted in tending of birds and the driving of plough, were more likely to engender or confirm a base disposition, than were his habits, when, with a—"walk in Ladies and Gentlemen,"—he stood at the door and received the six-pences, at his father's recitations in Marlbo-

rough-street.—So much for the high-blood of the elder Sheridan. Now for that of the son, who, at the time that he was receiving nearly four thousand pounds a year as Captain of a regiment serving abroad, and as Muster Master General of Ireland (a person having been placed upon the pension list, at twelve hundred pounds a year, to make way for him in this latter capacity), was, as you will remember, a principal actor in those scandalous scenes, which, on the part of our enemies, were exhibited during the election at Westminster; and who, at a public dinner, made a speech (if such it ought to be called), in which he represented the candidate of our choice as being of origin so low and base, as “that he (the younger Sheridan) should raise him in the estimation of society by kicking him out of it,” now for the high-blood of this man. His father *we know*; and, as to his mother, it is a fact pretty generally known; at least, it is a fact which is undeniably true, that she was the daughter of a *Fiddler* at Bath, which fiddler actually got his bread by fiddling, and by the teaching of others to fiddle and dance, and which daughter got her living by singing for hire. Both father and daughter were, we will, for argument’s sake, suppose, upon a footing in point of morality, with the parents of Mr. Paull; but, Gentlemen, without presuming to dictate, especially in matters of taste, to other persons, I must take the liberty of saying, that if it shall please God to give me life to choose for my children, the boys shall be journeymen tailors rather than master fiddlers, and the girls use their hands for hire all their lives long, rather than their throats for one single hour, though the wages of that hour were a fortune surpassing the sums, which the Sheridans united now annually draw from the labour of the people.

—Here, Gentlemen, I should dismiss the loathsome topic of high-blood, had not the elder Sheridan, at this same play-actors’ dinner, repeated his boast relative to his “noble” associates, Mr. Berkeley Craven, Mr. Lincoln Stanhope, Lord Petersham (who sneaked away at my approach through one half of the streets in the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John), Lord Barrymore, and the Reverend Mr. Barry. To attempt a scrutinizing inquiry into the ORIGIN of these gentlemen would be indecorous indeed; but, as to their pretensions to superiority over us, as public men, we will take the liberty to say a few words. What was uttered verbally, it would be impossible to record correctly; but, let the several publications, on both sides, be examined, and

there is, I am persuaded, no impartial man, who will not say, that the supporters of Mr. Sheridan were formed by nature, or by habit, to be *ruled by us*, who supported Mr. Paull; and, Gentlemen, though they happen to be upheld by a state of things calculated to favour them, I hope there are none amongst us so base as to believe, that it is, from that fact to be concluded, that they are our superiors. The whole of their proceedings, the whole of their publications, whether in committees, or by individuals, bespoke the barren, the mean, and venal mind. Not one address, not one hand-bill, not one single sentence, did there appear, upon this side, which could, even by possibility, excite, in the breast of a *free* man, a feeling favourable to their views. From the beginning to the end of the contest, they discovered, in all they said and in all they wrote, a total want of foresight and of talent, an inherent, an hereditary, and incorrigible stupidity. Of their writings I will put upon record one sample, which, while it will serve to enable men to judge of the literary abilities of our high-blooded opponents, may also serve as no very unsatisfactory answer to Dr. Knox, who pretends, that an acquaintance with the “learned languages” is absolutely necessary to the rightly understanding of our own. The paper, which I am about to cite is one taken, almost promiscuously, from amongst hundreds. It consists of certain resolutions, signed at a meeting in St. James’s parish, “the honourable” Lincoln Stanhope in the chair, and is worded as follows:—“RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan “has uniformly conducted himself in parliament, during twenty-six years, in a manner *as to deserve* well of his country, “—that he has proved himself to be a man “independent and full of integrity,—that “he has always acted up to those principles “which he has invariably professed, *namely*, “*A Friend to his King and Country; A Friend to the Constitution, and Liberties of the People.*—Under the impression of “these sentiments this meeting do now pass “a vote of thanks to the Right Honourable “Richard Brinsley Sheridan, for his patriotic conduct on all occasions; and do hereby pledge themselves to support him, in “order to assist him in carrying his election, “jointly with Sir Samuel Hood.—RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, that the thanks of “the committee be voted to the Honourable “Lincoln Stanhope, for his *able* conduct in “the chair, and his particular attention to “the interest of Mr. Sheridan.—(Signed) “LINCOLN STANHOPE.”—As to the sen-

timents expressed, and facts stated, here, all the world knows the former to be hypocritical and the latter false. But, it is the want of talent, the incomparable stupidity, exhibited in this writing, for his *able* conduct in having drawn up which this Lincoln Stanhope is thanked, and which resolution of thanks he himself signs, that I wished to point out. Talk of *tailors*, indeed! I much question if there be a tailor in the city of Westminster, where there are, probably, ten thousand tailors, who would not draw up a resolution more correctly, and more in a scholar-like manner, than this is drawn up. Verily, it is not for a man like this to despise tailors; for, to their ingenuity he evidently owes much more, in the way of being made a gentleman, than to father, mother, and preceptor united. Stripped of what the tailor has contributed, he instantly sinks, in the scale of animated nature, to a place beneath that of the rat. Yet, I will warrant you, gentlemen, that this Lincoln Stanhope had had his time at the University; that he has swaggered about for years in a black gown and conjuring cap; and, it would not be very marvellous, if some clerical teacher of the "learned languages" had had a benefice bestowed upon him as a reward for having superintended the culture of this precious scion of nobility. Nay; let them writhe! It was from *their* hand that the first stone was flung; and, I confidently trust, that, from *our* hand will go the last.—I shall be told, that *all* the nobility are not like the open supporters of the Sheridans. Certainly not; God forbid they should! But, I cannot help remembering, that, while many of them combined against us, *not one* of them voted on our side; and I was told, that even that famous liberty man, Lord **, gave a hundred pounds to the Sheridan subscription. So much the better, perhaps; we have nothing to thank them for. They did us no good, and all the harm they were able. We owe them nothing. To the Sheridans they gave their voices and their money; and to the Sheridans let them, if need should be, look for sacrifices. For my part, I shall never forget their conduct upon that occasion; and I trust, Gentlemen, that there are very few of you, who will not, upon all future occasions, bear it in mind.

The Sheridans took the opportunity afforded them by the play-actor's dinner to advert to an occurrence, which took place in the year 1803, relative to a *challenge*, which the younger Sheridan said he sent me. The elder Sheridan first told his respectable hosts, that his son would soon put me down; whereupon the son rose and said, that, in

consequence of a brutal attack, which I had made upon his father, he went to my house, with a cane, intending to "*thrash*" me; but, finding that I was not at home, he "afterwards thought it best to offer me a "pistol, and wrote to me for the purpose; "but that this valiant Mr. Cobbett gave "for answer, that he never fought duels." Gentlemen, here are two falsehoods. He never dared to come to my house; and he never wrote me a challenge. I had, if I recollect well, two notes from him, complaining of the attack, as he called it, upon his father; and, I remember, that, in answer to the last, I concluded by saying, that I supposed, that, now he was become a soldier, it would be of service to him to acquire some little reputation for bravery; and that, therefore, in order to embolden him to send me a challenge, I would tell him beforehand, that I never fought duels. After this the hero sent me a note, which, I suppose, he has kept as a copy of the challenge! But, Gentlemen, though this document may be very valuable as an heir-loom in the royal family of Sheridan, I submit to you how far it can, with propriety, be considered as a challenge. As to the insinuation, that I kept out of his sight, nothing can be more false. I gave particular directions, that, if he came, he should be shown up to me immediately; and I had armed myself with nothing but a horse-whip, with which, had he been saucy, I was resolved to belabour him as long as my arm would have held out; I was resolved to send him back to Bond-street in a worse plight than ever soldier descended from the halberts.—But, Gentlemen, I must not pass over the curious cause of this pretended challenge. It was, he says, a brutal attack made by me upon his father. So, you see, supposing him to have spoken the truth (and that is never a supposition to be hastily adopted), his father, the offended party, was for fighting me by proxy; and, with a degree of paternal tenderness truly worthy of the royal house of Sheridan, fixed upon his only son as a substitute; or, supposing the father to have guessed at the sort of combat that would ensue, it was serving the son as Hudibras would have served his 'Squire, shifted the flogging to his shoulders from his own. What, too, was this "*brutal attack*" upon the elder Sheridan? I have often had accusations of this kind preferred against me, and so will every man that dares to speak wholesome truths with respect to the people of high-blood, who appear to think, that, to their other privileges, they add that of being screened from all just satire. But, let the whole of my Register be examined,

and, if there be one single expression, to which the charge of brutality can properly be applied, I will instantly burn every copy of the work. It is not the language; it is not the manner; it is the *matter* that offends. I speak the *truth* of such persons; I speak in a way that enables every reader clearly to understand me; those readers are numerous, and the impression I make on them is lasting. This it is that gives offence; and, be assured, Gentlemen, that the cry of *violence*, and *coarseness*, and *brutality*, set up against me, is the pitiful resource of wounded folly or guilt. We need go no further, for an instance of this, than to the "attack," of which the younger Sheridan complained, as having been made upon his father. That "attack" was, in fact, a *defence* of myself, against an attack made by the elder Sheridan upon me, in the House of Commons, a place where it was impossible that I should answer him; and, it was made too, at a time, when he well knew, that the ministry wanted the sanction of the public to the means which they were plotting to silence me. For this manly and generous species of attack I took ample vengeance in ten letters, addressed to my assailant, and which letters gave him a blow that he never recovered, and that did, in fact, prepare the way for that complete justice, which the people of Westminster at last rendered him at the hustings of Covent Garden. It was in the sixth of these letters, which will be found in Vol. IV. page 577, that the younger Sheridan descried the "brutal attack." I beg leave, Gentlemen, to refer you to that letter; and, if you find in it one indecorous phrase; if you find in it any thing but fair and decent censure of censurable conduct, I will be content to be placed, even by you, whose good opinion I so highly prize, upon a level with the Sheridans; nay, with the younger Sheridan alone, which would, in my estimation, be by far the worst situation of the two.

For hiring singers and play-actors and farce-makers to assemble together, and not to make singing part of the entertainment, would be wonderful indeed; but, these people, during the boozing match, of which we are speaking, not content with a bare contempt of the day, upon which they chose to hold it, actually sang, with their hiring voices, the CXVth Psalm, which as you will recollect, begins thus: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise, for thy loving mercy and thy truth's sake;" applying this to the triumph of the Sheridans over us, which triumph was, as it will very soon be proved to all the

world, obtained by the basest and most detestable of means. After this Psalm followed a toast from the elder Sheridan: "Our *Old Friends*," whereupon, as the newspapers informed us, there were loud and reiterated *peals of laughter*. One of our poets, in his description of a hardened profligate, winds up a climax with saying, that he sang "bawdy songs to a psalm tune." But, the Sheridans and their companions have surpassed even this. They sing the psalm itself, and couple with it an allusion never publicly made; never made even in a private company, though in hours of the most unbridled mirth, except amongst those who have recourse to filthiness for lack of wit, or amongst blackguards in grain. Yet, the Sheridans were supported by all the most famous *saints* of the day, several of whom came from a great distance to vote for him. But, as I said before, they being place-men and pensioners, his cause was their cause; and, upon the same ground, they would, I verily believe, have voted for the devil himself.—The sagacious Mr. Homan, anticipating the probable effect of a commentary upon the play actor's dinner, told you, that this was a *private* dinner, and that, therefore, I had no right to comment upon it. So was the famous dinner at Bushy Park; but, accounts of both *were published in the daily papers*, and upon whatever they publish I will comment, if I think it necessary, and have time and room sufficient for the purpose. The singing of the psalm and the toast therewith coupled, came to my knowledge through the newspapers; and, as to the anecdote about Munden and Matthews, I state it as it got abroad, as other anecdotes are stated. It is, too, perfectly in character for the Sheridans to make a complaint of this sort, after having published private letters, letters altogether private, to serve a political purpose, while, at the same time, they suppressed the answers to those letters, which answers proved, that they understood the letters to have a meaning very different from that which they endeavoured to make the public believe they had. This is perfectly in character on the part of men, who, while they set all principle, all decency, public and private, at defiance; who, while they, in their conduct towards others, plead an exemption from all rules, whether of religion, law, or of good manners, claim for themselves the guardianship of all these, and, moreover, exact an observance, towards them, of delicacy so refined as to make it impossible that any one should pronounce their names unaccompanied with applause. I know not

how you feel upon this score, Gentlemen, but, to me, these insolent pretensions are infinitely more offensive than are their extortions upon our purse. What, in the name of justice and of reason, is there that should screen these sons of play-actors and of fiddlers from the lash of satire? They, who, as far as the wit of the elder and the witless impudence of the younger have been able to carry them, have spared nobody and nothing, whether high or low! It is hardly possible to name a person, or thing, of any note, that has not, at some time or other, been the object of their contemptuous ribaldry. And, now, forsooth, when, in their turn, they become the objects of satire, they would fain interpose an all-sheltering delicacy.

Here, Gentlemen, I should conclude; but, there is one part of the scandalous scene, which I must not suffer to go off without observation. We are told, in the *news-papers*, observe, that, about eleven o'clock, Lord Barrymore and his companions arrived; whereupon the elder Sheridan arose and addressed the company a second time, observing amongst other things, that, if the juvenile nobility of France had been like his noble friends who had just entered the room, the revolution in that country would never have taken place; which opinion he and Mr. Whitbread took occasion to express two or three times during the election. Whether this proceeded from a consciousness of the similarity, and from a wish to prevent the drawing of a comparison, between the French nobility and these the most prominent supporters of Mr. Sheridan, I shall not pretend to say; but, I defy Messrs. Whitbread and Sheridan to shew, that, at any time, the nobility of France were engaged in scenes of profligacy so degrading as that which has been the subject of these remarks. That, as far as it has tended to chastise the profligacy and insolence of the nobility, the French revolution is to be regarded as a good, you and I may readily allow; but, considering the connections of Mr. Sheridan, it must, I think, be agreed, that the doctrine, as coming from him, would seem to argue, that he has as little of discretion as of principle.

Merely to have added a little to the exposure of Mr. Sheridan and his partizans would be of little use. The main purpose of these remarks is to strengthen and confirm you in those sentiments and principles, which were conspicuous amongst you at the recent election. The times are at hand, when, notwithstanding the flowery prospects that are held out to us, it will require the

utmost exertions of *real* patriotism to preserve us from becoming the slaves of France; and, aware that the opinions of others may have more weight than my own, I will leave you to gather what a real patriot is, by describing to you what he is not, in the maxims of one of the wisest and best men this country ever produced, Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne.—“It is impossible an epicure should be a patriot. It is impossible, that a man who cheats at cards, or cogs the dice should be a patriot. It is impossible, that a man, who is false to his friends and neighbours should be true to the public. Every knave is a thorough knave; and a thorough knave is a knave throughout. A sot, a beast, benumbed by excess, is good for nothing, much less to make a patriot of. A fop, or man of pleasure, makes but a scurvy patriot. I have no opinion of your bumper patriots. Gamesters, rakes, bullies, stock-jobbers. Alas! what patriots!”

—Such are the men that we are to shun. As often as we confide in them, so often shall we be deceived and betrayed. All their professions and their pledges are made for the purpose of obtaining from us that suffrage which will enable them to obtain the power of robbing us of the means wherewith to gratify their base propensities. In another contest it will behove you to be more than ever upon your guard against seduction of every species. The good sense and public-spirit, which you so fully discovered at the last election, have set our enemies upon the alert. To stifle *your* voice is now their great object; because, they clearly perceive, that, from you, either of freedom or slavery, the whole nation will, finally, take the example. In the hands of the free and independent electors of Westminster is deposited the political destiny of England, and in the firm belief, that you will ever be faithful to your trust,

I remain,

Gentlemen,

Your sincere friend,

And most obedient Servant,

30th Jan. 1807.

WM. COBBETT.

SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT.—(continued from p. 177).—I. *Finance Plan*. II. *Lord Wellesley*. III. *Davison*.—I. The Finance Plan, opened to the House of Commons, on Thursday, the 29th day of last month, and of which plan an out-line, as published by the ministers, will be found in a subsequent page of this sheet, has given universal satisfaction to the country. To give an opi-

nion of such a plan, accompanied with reasons in detail, would, with the scanty materials as yet before me, be presumptuous in the highest degree; but, as in the case of a risque from instant death, we do not stop to inquire how long the patient shall live; so, in this case, there requires no reflection previous to the bestowing of our praise upon a plan, which, whatever it may finally produce, delivers us, at once, from the apprehensions of those additional burthens, which *must* have speedily caused a destruction of the government. If I, for my part, have, with more earnestness than most other men, insisted on the evils attendant upon the system of taxation; if I have, even to the wearying of my readers, repeated the assertion, that it *must stop*, or that a general disinclination to resist the enemy would be the unavoidable consequence; if I have, in spite of being denominated a jacobin and a leveller, in spite of abuse from the hirelings of the press, from the bar, and, by something broader than insinuation, from the Parliament itself, positively asserted, that the war might be carried on without new taxes; if I have, in this way, been distinguished above most other men, I may, surely, be expected to take my full share of the general satisfaction at a plan, in which the ministers solemnly, and in terms the most unequivocal, pledge themselves to us, *that there shall be no new taxes for three years next ensuing*; that we shall enjoy three years, three whole years, without any further undermining of our liberties by taking our property from us; three blessed years, without beholding the hideous face of a new-created, gaunt and hungry tax-gatherer.—Upon the *reasoning* of the plan; upon the *opinions* expressed here and there, in the description of it; upon its *efficacy* as to what is called the “redeeming” of the debt; I shall, at present, say nothing; but, I beg leave to be understood as expressing my approbation of no part of it, except that which provides for the absolute prevention of new taxes for three years to come; which is, indeed, the only interesting part of the measure; and, for this part, I thank the ministers, individually and collectively, from the bottom of my heart.—I was morally certain, that new taxes sufficient to pay the interest of this year’s loan, *could* not have been raised. All the sources were completely exhausted. What was laid on in one way had, for three years past, been falling off in another way; and, if the nominal amount was increased, the value of money diminished in nearly the same proportion; there being no positive addition except in vexation and slavery. The

insolence of office, on the one side, and the hatred on the other side, cannot now be increased; and, they will naturally diminish; because, by this measure, the government has convinced the nation, that they regard taxation as an evil.—It will make the ministry popular; and so it ought. It will confirm their hold against the intrigues of the secret cabinet; and, what is really to be regarded as a great blessing, it will extinguish, not merely by snuffing out, but, as it were in a horse-pond, the little court-fed faction of the Roses and the Cannings and the Castlereaghs and the Percevals, whom the Morning Chronicle, I hope, will no longer call “an Opposition.”—To this plan, there wants nothing added but a rigorous squeezing of speculators, a reduction of places and pensions, an impartial taxing, without any exception, the property in the funds, and an abolition of pluralities in the church, to make me say, “now, Napoleon, England sets thee at defiance.” Only let the ministers proceed in the good work they have begun, and they will stand in need of no mercenaries, political or military; and all the Swiss and Hanoverians and others that we have to maintain, at such an enormous expense, they may safely send away.—As to the persons, who have, immediately or remotely assisted in the forming of this excellent plan, or in causing its adoption, numerous conjectures and some reports are afloat; but, I have not perceived, that either Sir Francis Burdett, Mr. Paull, or myself, has been even guessed at as having had a hand in the meritorious work; yet, I am more than half persuaded to believe, that, if there had been no election at Westminster, and if Sir Francis had made no speeches, and I had written no Registers, it would not, at least so soon, have been discovered, that new taxes were no longer necessary. Nor will I be so unjust as to withhold from Mr. Sheridan his probable share of the merit; for, assuredly, his declaration, that he was ready to assist in taking from us “even the necessities of life,” for the purpose of carrying on the war, was, together with the effects which the keeping of it constantly before the public naturally produced, extremely well calculated to make the ministers look about them. To be sure, the minister’s plan discovers Mr. Sheridan’s knowledge in matters of political œconomy in rather a disadvantageous light; but, the qualities of the heart are always to be considered before those of the head; and, if the “Right Honourable” Gentleman has not been called upon to give his vote for taking from us “the necessities of life,” there are very

few of us, I imagine, that will not readily accept the will for the deed.—When, however, good has been effected, it would be foolish to quarrel about the agents. It is little matter who forced the subject upon the attention of the ministers, or whom they employed in the calculations. In their hands alone was the power of adoption or rejection; and, to them alone, with all my heart, let the merit belong. For my part, I again declare, with perfect sincerity, that, individually and collectively, I thank them from the bottom of my heart; and, I must be permitted to say, that if I am not, in this feeling, joined by my countrymen in general, they are the most unreasonable, capricious, and ungrateful beings upon the face of the earth.

—II. Lord Wellesley's conduct in the Carnatic is to become, at last, a subject of parliamentary inquiry. Sir Thomas Turton, who, I was afraid, had enlisted himself under the Cannings, has given notice of a motion for papers. These papers, the public will recollect, were before printed upon the motion of Mr. Sheridan, who, as it will also be recollected, abandoned the cause in the manner detailed in my preceding sheet. The papers cost *thirteen hundred pounds* in the printing; and the expense is now to be incurred again, because it is a new parliament, the first expence being one of the many sums, which Mr. Sheridan's *patriotism* has cost those who were weak enough to be the dupes of it.—That Sir Thomas Turton will steadily pursue the inquiry, I anxiously hope; for this is one of the foreign transactions, in which our character and our interest are deeply involved. If he does steadily pursue it, he will have the support, or good wishes, of all honest men; and, if he should, contrary to our hopes and expectations, drop it without quite sufficient cause assigned, he must expect to meet with their reproach.—III. Lord Archibald Hamilton gave notice, some days ago, of a motion upon the subject of *Davison*; but, he has been induced not to make the motion by an intimation from the ministers, that measures were to be taken *immediately* to make that contractor disgorge; and, if a statement in the ministerial papers be true, such measures are actually taking. We shall see what is done; but, unless the money be demanded and obtained *immediately*, I hope some member of parliament will be found to make a motion upon the subject. Certainly much has been gained within these three years. Who, in the days of the squandering and stifling Pitt, would have imagined, that such inquiries as these would ever become fashion-

able! Those days, when every man who dared to utter a breath against corruption and public-robbery, when every man who dared to let his groans be heard, was called a jacobin, and was marked out for vengeance, through the means of secret imprisonment; those days of tyranny and of terror are gone, never, I trust, to return; but, it behoves us never, for one moment, to relax in our endeavours, to crush for ever the minions of that remorseless persecutor. As to his *monument*, I will warrant that, except the expense, that will do us no harm; and, besides, the stones are certainly worth something.

CONTINENTAL WAR.—What can I say upon this subject? In my next, I intend to put *upon record* the lies of a week, published in the London daily news papers, to describe the folly and baseness of the proprietors or editors of which is a task that I will not undertake, because it would be impossible, even if I could borrow the eloquence of Dryden or of Otway, that any description should not fall far short of the reality. There is, however, one thing, which I can do, and which I never yet have done; and that is, to expose, in detail, the venality of this press. To show how the proprietors sell their paragraphs of praise, and what sums they receive for hush-money. Not a word has any one of them yet said about *Davison*, though, as the indignant public will recollect, many of them published whole sides against Lord Melville, pending the proceedings against him.—What assurance; what impenetrable impudence must they be furnished with to enable them to look the public in the face, after all the falsehoods and fooleries of the last fifteen days! This at once stupid and prostituted press (the *names* of the proprietors of which shall be published one of these days); this it is, that is the great cause of public error, and of speculation too. No matter how villainous a man's deeds, if he can find money to pay this press. It is an honour beyond almost any other to be an object of the combined hatred of its proprietors, as I flatter myself I am.—As to the affairs in Poland, they stand just as described in the French bulletins; and, as to what is likely to happen, I retain my opinion, as given in my last sheet, page 177.

“LEARNED LANGUAGES.”—Two letters upon this subject will be found below. I have numbered them for convenience of reference, No. 3 contains not one argument that I myself could not demolish in three minutes; but, until some “learned” man has answered No. 4, it will be useless,

I imagine, for the cap-and-gown men to go any further. I have two more letters for next week, upon the subject.

FINANCE PLAN,

As described in an official paper, published by the ministers.

The new plan of finance has, for its object, to provide the means of maintaining the honour and independence of the British empire, during the necessary continuance of the war; without perceptibly increasing the burthens of the country, and with manifest benefit to the interests of the public creditor.—The proposed measure is grounded on the flourishing state of the permanent revenue; on the great produce of the war taxes; on the high and accumulating amount of the sinking fund; and on some inferior aids to be derived from revenues set free by annuities originally granted for a term of years, and now expiring. These circumstances, so favourable to the introduction and maintenance of a new system, are justly to be attributed to the wise, provident, and spirited exertions, which have had the concurrent support of parliament and of the people, during the whole eventful period of the last twenty years.—The plan is adapted to meet a scale of expenditure nearly equal to that of the year 1806; and it assumes, that during the war, the annual produce of the permanent and temporary revenues will continue equal to the produce of the same year 1806. It is understood, that any further or unforeseen charge, or any deficiency of revenue, shall be separately and specially provided for.—Keeping these premises in view, it is proposed, that the war loans for the years 1807, 1808, and 1809, shall be twelve millions annually; for the year 1810, fourteen millions; and for each of the ten following years, sixteen millions.—Those several loans, amounting for the fourteen years to 210 millions, are to be made a charge on the war taxes, which are estimated to produce 21 millions annually.—The charge thus thrown on the war taxes is meant to be at the rate of 10 per cent. on each loan. Every such loan will therefore pledge so much of the war taxes as will be equal to meet this charge;—that is, a loan of 12 millions will pledge £1,200,000 of the war taxes. And in each year, if the war should be continued, a further portion of the war taxes will, in the same manner, be pledged. And consequently, at the end of fourteen years, if the war should last so long, 21 millions, the whole produce of the war taxes, would be pledged for the total of the loans, which would at that time,

have amounted to 210 millions.—The ten per cent. charge thus accompanying each loan, will be applied to pay the interest of the loan, and to form a sinking fund, which sinking fund will evidently be more than five per cent. on such of the several loans as shall be obtained at a less rate of interest than five per cent.—It is well known, that a five per cent. sinking fund, accumulating at compound interest, will redeem any sum of capital debt in fourteen years. Consequently, the several portions of the war taxes, proposed to be pledged for the several loans above-mentioned, will have redeemed their respective loans, and be successively liberated in periods of fourteen years from the date of each such loan. The portions of war taxes thus liberated, may, if the war should still be prolonged, become applicable in a revolving series, and may be again pledged for new loans.—It is, however, shewn by the printed calculations and tables, that, whatever may be the continuance of the operation of the property tax, will not be payable beyond the period for which it is now granted by the 46 Geo. 3. ch. 65, but will, in every case, be in force only during the war, and until the sixth day of April next after the ratification of a definitive treaty of peace, and no longer.—It is next to be observed, that the charge for the interest and sinking fund of the proposed loans, being taken from the annual produce of the war taxes, a deficiency equal to that charge will be created in the amount of the temporary revenue applicable to the war expenditure.—Supplementary loans will be requisite to make good that deficiency.—Those supplementary loans must increase in proportion to the increasing deficiency, if the war should be continued, but will never amount, even in a period of twenty years war from the present time, to more than five millions in any year, beyond the amount to which the sinking fund of that year will have been raised by this plan.—It is proposed that the supplementary loans shall be formed on the established system of a sinking fund of one per cent. on the nominal capital.—The charge so created will be provided for, during the first three years, by the expiring annuities; and during that period the country will have the great benefit of an exemption from all additional burthens. A new spring may thus be given to the energy of our commerce; at all events it will obtain a security from the increased pressures which it must otherwise experience.—From 1810, and for the six following years, a charge must be provided for, amounting on the average of those seven

years to not more than £293,000 annually: a sum in itself so small, in comparison with the great additions which have necessarily been made to the taxes in each year, for the last fourteen years, that it can scarcely be felt, and cannot create any difficulty as to the means of providing for it:—But even this comparatively small amount may probably be much diminished by the increasing produce of the actual revenues, and by regulations for their further improvement.—And thus provision is made, on the scale of actual expenditure, for ten years of war, if it should be necessary, without any additional taxes, except to the inconsiderable amount above stated. At the close of that period, taking the three per cents. at 60, and reducing the whole of the public debts at that rate to a money capital, the combined amount of the public debts will be £387,360,000, and the combined amount of the several sinking funds then existing will be £22,720,000; whereas the present amount of the whole public debt taken on the same scale of calculation is £352,793,000, and the present amount of the sinking fund is no more than £8,335,000.—If the war should still be continued beyond the ten years thus provided for, it is proposed to take in aid of the public burthens certain excesses to accrue from the present sinking fund. That fund, which Mr. Pitt (the great author of a system that will immortalize his name) originally proposed to limit to four millions annually, will, with the very large additions derived to it from this new plan, have accumulated in 1817 to so large an amount as 24 millions sterling. In the application of such a sum, neither the true principles of Mr. Pitt's system, nor any just view of the real interests of the public, or even of the stockholder himself, can be considered as any longer opposing an obstacle to the means of obtaining at such a moment some aid in alleviation of the burthens and necessities of the country. But it is not proposed in any case to apply to the charge of new loans a larger portion of the sinking fund than such as will always leave an amount of sinking fund equal to the interest payable on such part of the present debt as shall remain unredeemed. Nor is it meant that this or any other operation of finance shall ever prevent the redemption of a sum equal to the present debt in as short a period as that in which it would have been redeemed, if this new plan had not been brought forwards. Nor will the final redemption of any supplementary loans be postponed beyond the period of 45 years prescribed by the act of 1792 for the extinction of all future loans. While each

of the annual war loans will be successively redeemed in 14 years from the date of its creation, so long as war shall continue; and whenever peace shall come, will be redeemed always within a period far short of the 45 years required by the above-mentioned Act.—In the result therefore of the whole measure, there will not be imposed any new taxes for the first three years from this time. New taxes of less than £300,000, on an average of seven years from 1810 to 1816, both inclusive, are all that will be necessary, in order to procure for the country the full benefit and advantages of the plan here described; which will continue for twenty years; during the last ten of which again no new taxes whatever will be required.—It appears, therefore, that Parliament will be enabled to provide for the prolonged expenditure of a necessary war, without violating any right or interest whatever, and without imposing further burthens on the country, except to a small and limited amount: and these purposes will be attained with benefit to the public creditor, and in strict conformity both to the wise principles on which the Sinking Fund was established, and to the several Acts of Parliament by which it has been regulated.—It is admitted that if the war should be prolonged, certain portions of the war taxes, with the exception of the Property tax, will be more or less pledged for periods, in no case exceeding fourteen years. How far some parts of those taxes are of a description to remain in force after the war; and what may be the provision to be made hereafter for a peace establishment, probably much larger than in former periods of peace; are considerations which at present need not be anticipated.—It is reasonable to assume, that the means and resources which can now maintain the prolonged expenditure of an extensive war, will be invigorated and increased by the return of peace, and will then be found amply sufficient for the exigencies of the public service. Those exigencies must at all events be comparatively small, whatever may still be the troubled and precarious circumstances of Europe.—Undoubtedly there prevails in the country a disposition to make any farther sacrifices that the safety, independence, and honour of the nation may require; but it would be an abuse of that disposition, to apply it to unnecessary and overstrained exertions. And it must not pass unobserved, that in the supposition of a continued war, if the loans for the annual expenditure should be raised according to the system hitherto pursued, permanent taxes must be imposed, amounting in the period assumed, to 13 millions additional

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revenue. Such an addition would add heavily to the public burthens, and would be more felt after the return of peace than a temporary continuance of the war taxes. In the mean time, and amidst the other evils of war, the country would be subjected to the accumulated pressure of all the old revenues, and of the war taxes, and of new permanent taxes.—The means of effectuating a plan of such immense importance, arise partly from the extent to which the system of the Sinking Fund has already been carried in pursuance of the intentions of its author; and partly from the great exertions made by Parliament, during the war, to raise the war taxes to their present very large amount. It now appears that the strong measure adopted in the last session, by which all the war taxes, and particularly the Property tax, were so much augmented, was a step taken not merely with a view to provide for present necessities, but in order to lay the foundation of a system which should be adequate to the full exigencies of this unexpected crisis, and should combine the two apparently irreconcilable objects, of relieving the Public from all future pressure of taxation, and of exhibiting to the enemy resources by which we may defy his implacable hostility to whatever period it may be prolonged.—To have done this is certainly a recompence for many sacrifices and privations. This is a consideration which will enable the country to submit with cheerfulness to its present burthens, knowing that although they may be continued in part, for a limited time, they will be now no further increased.

“*LEARNED LANGUAGES.*”

No. 3.

N. B. *The letters from different persons, upon this subject, will be NUMBERED for the sake of easy reference. The letter, in page 118, is considered as No. 1, and that, in p. 119, as No. 2.)*

SIR,—I am sorry to see, in your Register of the 10th inst. that you are disposed to turn your attention from political subjects, in which you are no doubt qualified to instruct and amuse your readers, to others of a literary nature, in which you are not so competent to do either. The use of the words “*uti possidetis*” in the late debate on the negociation for peace, have to be sure thrown you into a most hideous rage; (though you, I think, on your own principles have least occasion to quarrel with them, inasmuch, as you allow they may be easily enough understood by the stupidest wretch upon earth), and from this you are led into

a bitter phillippic against classical erudition in general, with which, by the way, the words have nothing to do, they being as you tell us a “relick of the mummery of monkery,” which “mummery” it was the effect of classical erudition to abolish. Nor will any “pedagogue or pedant” be easily inclined to compare you to the fox in the fable, inasmuch as *he* was conscious of the loss he had sustained, but *your* want of learning, though obvious enough to others, is not equally so to yourself: an overweening confidence in what you do possess, has blinded you to the value of attainments, which you do not: and, indeed, from the subject and manner of your late challenge to the two Universities, I am almost induced to join in an opinion which I heard suggested a short time ago, that the warmth of your feelings, and the insolence of success, were operating a gradual derangement of your intellects.—The two Universities may probably never hear of your appeal to them, and it is still less likely that they should attend to it; but, I think it not difficult for one, who knows but little of either of them, to disprove as much of your assertion respecting the inutility of the Greek and Latin languages, in a general plan of education, as has any thing of sense or meaning in it: I say, “as much as has any thing of sense or meaning in it;” for, as to your objection to their being called “learned,” that can only be a cavil about words; they are not called so exclusively, they are as often termed “the dead, or the ancient languages,” and more usually described as I have done them above, by appellations taken from the country where they were spoken; and when you have shewn the world a more proper term than any or all of these, the world may, if it please adopt your improvement; but, it will be without any the slightest alteration in the intrinsic value of the learning and knowledge, their respective authors possess.—“Learning,” you say, “consists in the possession of knowledge, and in the capacity of communicating that knowledge to others.” And did the Greek and Roman writers “possess the knowledge, or were they without the faculty of communicating it to others,” in apposite perspicuous and elegant language? If neither of these suppositions be true, the inference which you draw, viz. that the “learned languages operate as a bar to real learning,” has no relation whatever to your premises, that “learning consists in the possession of knowledge, and in the faculty of communicating it.”—But, if you really presume to say, that the ancients have written nothing, which it is not waste of

time for us to know, I shall not upbraid you with the trite adage, "that no one ever despised learning, but those who had it not;" because, I still think you do not deserve such a reproof; but, I will venture to say, that no man who ever wrote on any subject so much as you have done on that of politics, has been known to entertain a similar opinion; and, further, that you will find some difficulty in persuading mankind to sacrifice their faith in all authors, both ancient and modern, both foreign and domestic, at the shrine of your assurance. The most instructive of the Roman poets has enjoined his countrymen to take Greek patterns of fine writing into their hands, and to study them by night and by day;

Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ. HOR.

And, there can be no doubt, but that the same advice is at present applicable both to Greeks and Romans. What was it that drew Europe from the sink of barbarism in which it had been plunged for so many ages, but the discovery of ancient manuscripts; the dispersion, and study of them? Every author who has treated of this subject, either professedly or incidentally, has ascribed the present improved state of society to this primary cause. I am aware that the authority of great names does not weigh much with one, who is but little acquainted with the merits of their possessors; and quotations are superfluous, where they would be endless. I shall just, however, mention to you, that you will have to contend with Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Mosheim, Voltaire, Burnett, and the living author Roscoe. Neither do I mean to say, that a child of the 19th century will not grow up somewhat more enlightened, without the study of ancient literature, than one of the 14th; it will no doubt partake of the general diffusion of knowledge around it. But it comes into the world with no new faculties; it has no new senses. What has enlarged its mind, and increased its stock of ideas five hundred years ago, will do the same now. A man of eminence in literature, cannot at his decease place his posterity upon the summit to which he has climbed: if he could, it would be unnecessary to tread the same ground over again, his children might go on ascending from the point where their father left them. But, no; every individual must tread the steep for himself; some may mount faster indeed, and some slower, but each must mount for himself. Aristotle told Alexander, there was no royal way of acquiring knowledge; and, I doubt much whether you can shew us any vulgar one. A ready child will find no material obstruction to his acquisition of know-

ledge, in the merely learning any language in which knowledge may be contained. A slow one will attain to great learning in no way. Those in the intermediate stages will acquire each his proportionate degree of improvement; but, be assured that none can hope to slip out of the tried and beaten path, and arrive first at the goal.—So much as to the general plan of education; and now as to the effects resulting from it. "As far as my observation will enable me to speak, what are called the learned languages operate as a bar to real learning." No sentence was, I believe, ever more preposterously dogmatical, more gravely ridiculous: nor, will I believe, for the honour of your understanding, that you ever made any observation on the subject till the moment you were writing the words. For, in reality, this notable sentence, this Pythagorean aphorism, this "ipse dixit."—Nay, don't start at the expression; there is the same reason for your being in amity with it, which you gave for quarrelling with other two harmless Latin words; "they may be understood by the stupidest wretch on earth, they may be taught a bullfinch, a tom-tit, &c." After all, I say, your only meaning can be, that the easiest way to acquire learning is, to neglect a part of it!!!—Indeed, the matter may be easily enough ascertained, whether "the learned languages operate as a bar to real learning," by a reference to history and fact. There have been at all times since the revival of letters, men of classical erudition, and men of no classical erudition; which have done most in the cause of science? Take for example the beginning of last century; the men of classical learning were, Steele, Addison, Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, &c. Their earliest productions were translations from those languages, which you, by way of derision, and I, out of respect, call learned; every page of their more mature writings teems with recommendations of the study, or transfusions of the spirit of ancient authors. These are the men who with the avenues "to real learning" barred, as you suppose, against them, whose time and labour had been employed, as you tell us, in a manner "worse than uselessly;" these are they, who have instructed and entertained mankind for the last century, and will probably continue to do so till the end of the world. Now, what were your friends of the same period doing, who had no such "bar operating in their way to real learning?" There might probably be then about seven millions of such in this kingdom; of these seven millions, one million might be able to read and write; an hundred thousand capable of wri-

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ting their native language correctly: a twentieth part of these, to acquire “real learning” without the obstruction of the ancient languages; what have these five thousand men done in the cause of literature compared with their five cotemporaries mentioned above? Nay, if there were but five hundred of them, or only fifty in the whole kingdom, what “knowledge did they possess?” How and where “have they communicated it to others?” How has the world benefited by their attainments? Some such men there must have been, except you mean to maintain that there were no men of natural parts and leisure to improve them, but those whom I have mentioned above, and that those were such misled creatures, that they immediately began to clog the talents God had given them by an application to such learning as was “worse than useless.” Where then are the works of their rivals, who were free from this clog and obstruction? What are their opinions? Refer me to their writings.—The same observations will apply to every other period, both of British and European history. I shall just as a farther proof select one more, where probably at first sight, the comparison may appear more favourable to your opinions; I mean the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The men of classical erudition in her time were, Sidney, Raleigh, Hooker, “Bacon,” &c. Will any man in his senses deny to these illustrious persons, the “possession of knowledge, and the faculty of communicating it to others?” Yet not only all of them were excellently versed in the “learned languages,” but the three latter could not have moved one step in their respective walks of science, without the most extensive knowledge of them. Opposed to these, and to many more, whom I could mention, you may perhaps be inclined to place Shakespeare. But, there are many reasons why he can be of no service to your cause; for, in the first instance, your position is, that the “learned languages operate as a bar to real learning.” Now, of Shakespeare it is allowed on all hands, that whatever he did, was by dint of genius only; Johnson calls it “intuition;” so that where learning is the subject he is quite out of the question. Hume considers him as “a person without any instruction, either from the world or from books: (vol. vi appendix) and Dryden describes him as “too lofty to need being raised by the stilts of learning,” or something to that effect. But even were this not the case; and supposing him to have derived great advantages from the study of whatever English authors might exist in his day; yet

what such a genius can do forms no general rule for a “general plan of education” or of any thing else: Corelli, I believe it was, could play an air on the violin with all the strings loose, yet few musical professors would recommend the want of pegs and rosin on that account.—In this manner I might go on, and shew that all the knowledge which the world possesses, (except perhaps in some of the mere mechanic arts, and the phenomena of nature) has sprung from the same source, from men of great talents, cultivated by learning of every kind, but more especially, classical. One advantage derived from the study of ancient literature, is so appropriate to the nature of your employment, that I am tempted to give it you in the words of the enlightened author; “In England the love of freedom, which unless checked, flourishes extremely in all liberal natures, acquired new force, and was regulated by more enlarged views, suitably to that cultivated understanding, which became every day more common among men of birth and education. A familiar acquaintance with the precious remains of antiquity excited in every generous breast a passion for a limited constitution, and begat an emulation of those manly virtues, which the Greek and Roman authors, by such animating examples, as well as pathetic expressions, recommend to us” Hume, vol. vi. ch. 45.)—You have made a reference to Milton in the column following these your remarks on education. Have you never heard of his reading the ancient authors “till his mind was full fraught?” Of his employing his daughters in the same task? Of his warming his imagination from them before he sat down to compose? From you he might have learned that such labours were “useless;” that his time was “worse than misspent in them;” in short, that “learning was not *real* learning,” if it was not written in plain English.—It will be some testimony of the esteem in which I hold your talents, if I venture to recommend the application of them; confine your remarks to the Jenkinsons and Roses of the present time, and have nothing to do with the Platos and Xenophons of antiquity: you have shewn that you can express with energy the feelings which are excited in ingenuous breasts by the passing occurrences of the day, and that ought to satisfy you. Thucydides and Tacitus were men of generous natures, they have bequeathed their gathered stores as an eternal inheritance to posterity, while the **** and **** are sucking the blood of the present generation; the former

would enrich the world after their decease, the latter are plundering their country during their lives. Lest I should appear to pay an undue respect to classical literature, an exclusive deference to ancient authors, I shall conclude with Petrarch's recommendation of books in general; it is taken to avoid the pedantry of a “learned language” from the Abbé de Sade's life of that elegant Poet, and great restorer of letters. But the biographer was not aware that Petrarch had himself borrowed the ideas from his English friend Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham. “Ce sont des gens de tous les pais, et de tous les siècles distingués à la guerre, dans la robe, et dans les lettres; aisés à vivre, toujours à mes ordres; je les fais venir quand je veux, et je les renvoie de même: ils n'ont jamais d'humeur, et répondent à toutes mes questions.”—P. F.—*Jan.* 20, 1807.

“LEARNED LANGUAGES.”

No. 4.

“In pride, in reasoning pride, our error lies.”

SIR,—As you have avowed the intention of deferring until Lady-Day, the arguments you have to adduce, to prove that the “learned languages” are an useless branch of education; I shall take the opportunity in the interim, of skirmishing a little with your learned competitor from the university of Oxford, if that gentleman will condescend to listen to any thing such a Tyro as myself can have to offer upon the subject. I know, Mr. Cobbett, that mine is an hazardous enterprise, and I should certainly not enter the lists, were I not emboldened with the hope, that as you will be a spectator, you will ensure fair play, and that when I am fallen, you will kindly interpose your invulnerable armour to prevent me from being completely annihilated. However, Sir, to act with all due prudence, I here humbly implore the literati (I believe the university gentlemen so denominate themselves), that when I am vanquished (for fear your timely interference, Mr. Cobbett, should be prevented by any unforeseen occurrence), that they will allow me a short respite, just long enough to see your promised arguments, and then I shall give up my literary ghost with cheerfulness and satisfaction. I have one other favour to beg of that *illuminated phalanx*, namely, that they will have the goodness not to discipline themselves in the use of those books, they call Greek and Latin Lexicons; as a friend of mine informs me, that if they batter and bruise me with hard uncouth words, as they are a species of cabalistic weapons with which I am entirely

unacquainted, I shall stand no chance whatever alone, and that such will be the prejudice against me, that not one learned man will be found, however slender his purse, who can be bribed to assist me: I therefore, here publicly declare, that, as I shall use only such words as are to be met with in the Dictionary of our old friend Dr. Johnson, I expect to be dealt with in a like liberal, civil, and gentlemanly manner. I shall now take my ground, Mr. Cobbett, by enquiring into the meaning, or definition (the university term), of a couple of words or so, which I think it will be very material should be well understood before we grow too warm in this learned combat. First, then, I ask, what is meant by the word LEARNING? Because I observe, it is frequently said, that some men learn vice, some virtue; and I have even heard it said, that some men learn nothing at all: now these are plainly contrary species of learning, differing materially both in quantity and quality. But the learning that will come under our observation will have attached to it, I apprehend, the same sense we mean when speaking of “learned men;” and which I shall define, until I see a better interpretation, to be wisdom; just as if we were to say, a man was wise, instead of learned; and I am fortified in this definition, because I take the word learning to be the scholar's modest substitution for wisdom: he would blush to say barefacedly he was a wise man, but he does not hesitate to say he is a learned one; and to have learnt any thing less than wisdom, would be rather, I presume, a subject of censure than of praise; so that I take learning in the university sense of the word, clearly to mean wisdom. I shall next beg to consider the word wisdom; and that I shall define, until I hear something more satisfactory, to be in a religious sense, a knowledge of the duty we owe to God, and in a moral one, the duty we owe to ourselves and to society; and any thing having a complexion contrary to this, I submit, with deference, is not entitled to the appellation of wisdom.—Assuming, therefore, that these definitions are correct, I mean to lay down this position, viz. that the man who has ten distinct moral ideas, and has only one word applicable to, and by which he can express the meaning of each idea, is ten times as wise, as the man who possesses but one distinct idea, but who has ten words to express it in. I draw, therefore, this inference; that if I, John Bull, ignorant of all outlandish tongues, have, either by converse with my brother John Bulls, or by reading of their productions, or by both methods, ac-

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quired any given number of ideas upon any one given science, whether religion, ethics, physics, or any other, that although I should employ myself *twenty* years in the study, and absolutely attain to the knowledge of ten different languages, that I shall not then be one jot wiser upon either of those sciences than I was before, unless I shall have added to the number or stock of those ideas with which I was previously familiar; by which I mean to be understood, that wisdom consists in ideas and not in words, which are mere vehicles or mental travelling-chaises, by which the idea or conception of one man is conveyed to the understanding of another: so that the knowledge of various languages is only useful in proportion as it affords us those ideas, *which by the mere knowledge of our own language we could not obtain.* Now, then, Mr. Cobbett, I come to close combat with the late Oxford Collegiate, and I think he must be worsted, unless he can defend himself by producing, which I defy him to do, some one idea that he has acquired from his acquaintance with the LEARNED LANGUAGES, that was not *previously to be found* in some one of the works of John Bull, either original or a translation, printed in our own invaluable, but ill-fated language, to depreciate the sublimity, beauty, and harmony whereof, there has been a conspiracy in this country for many centuries, and will continue to be so, I am afraid, so long as those two receptacles for learned-insanes, called the universities, are suffered to remain. I challenge then, I say, the Oxonian to give us any one such new idea, either the discovery of *himself* or *any of his associates*, within the last twenty years; and, if he cannot satisfactorily answer this challenge, I leave it to the impartial among us to say, to what a straightened condition the university hero is reduced—Should he, however, by any very lucky hit, by any fortuitous circumstance, inform us of one solitary novelty, I shall then leave it to you, Mr. Cobbett, *gravely* to sit in judgment, *if you can*, and putting the *important* discovery in one scale, and the myriad of hours which the myriad of scholars have devoted to the study of the *learned languages* in the other, to tell us, whether the discovery be a compensation or not for the anxiety, loss of health, labour, and time, which these learned persons have experienced in the course of that period; at the same time bearing in mind, the immense BOUNTIES which have been given, from time to time, within these twenty years, for soldiers, sailors, and ship-carpenters, the greater part of which expense

might have been saved, had the literati of the two universities followed either of those useful occupations.

Lincoln's Inn, Jan. 21, 1807.

W. F. S.

SUGAR TRADE.

(Continued from page 185.)

5. The use of Sugar and Molasses should be permitted in our distilleries in Great Britain. A proposition to this effect is now under consideration in the House of Commons, where Mr. Baker is represented to have expressed an apprehension, that the landed interest might be hurt by a cheapness in the price of corn, in consequence of such permission. I have already stated, that such an apprehension is altogether groundless; but, as the tenderest regard is due to the landed interest, and, as I consider the suggestions of the member for Staffordshire to be entitled to considerable respect, I will proceed more at length to establish what I have asserted on this head. I must, however, by the way, observe on the summary proof of the astonishingly rapid depreciation in the exchangeable value of money, afforded by this single instance. During 10 years ending 1780, the average price of the quartern-loaf was 7d. During the next 10 years it was 7½. (see Reg. vol. vi. p. 239, vol. vii. p. 307.) In the beginning of 1807, the same loaf sells for 1s. 1½d.; and at the same time an intelligent member of parliament is fearful, and in the House of Commons expresses his fear, that the landed interest should suffer by the cheapness of corn. Sir, I do not assert that corn is too dear, or that it is likely to be too dear: but, I do assert, and every man of common sense and common fairness will immediately admit the truth of the assertion, that while the price of bread has thus increased, and while, as is most notorious, the price of all other necessities, and the wages of labour, and the money returns on every other sort of real capital have likewise increased, it is most monstrous that the Englishmen who have possessions in our West Indies should alone be reduced, and reduced not by natural causes, but by the measures of government, to the necessity of selling the produce which they raise, for a less money price even than it yielded five and twenty years ago. But, I am now to shew, that the use of British sugar and molasses in the British distilleries, need not excite any alarm, that British corn would become too cheap. The price of *British corn* depends on the parliamentary regulations respecting the importation of *foreign corn*. It is well known, that in this country we have not for several years past produced enough of corn

for the food of our own people, and of the beasts employed in the tillage of our land, and to furnish meat; and there is very little doubt, that the deficiency is yearly increasing; for, though the quantity of corn raised may be augmented by new inclosures, and an improved system of agriculture, yet there is abundant reason to convince us, that the demand for corn is still more augmented, by reason of our increasing population. Now, in such a state of things it is plain, that if there were no importation of foreign grain, our corn would sell at a *monopoly price*; that is, the highest price which the producer should require, and the consumer should be able to pay: for the latter must buy corn, or he must starve; and without importation there would not be in the market so much as he wants. He would therefore be completely at the mercy of the producer. To prevent this evil, and the famine which would attend it, the importation of corn from abroad is permitted; but, still (in adherence to those benign principles, which are uniformly acted upon in favour of all classes of Englishmen, except those who have property in our West Indian islands) this importation is restricted by *protecting duties*; by means of which the price of corn can never fall below that point, at which it is supposed to yield to the producer sufficient return; for, in case of its depending to that point, prohibiting duties would immediately attach upon the importation of foreign grain, by the operation of which duties, no corn could be brought to our markets but that which had been raised at home: and as the whole quantity of this is known to be insufficient to supply the demand, the price must immediately rise. At present the corn trade is regulated by the statute of the 44th of the King, under which wheat can never be sold for less than 63s. or barley for less than 31s. 6d. the quarter; seeing that, whenever the prices fall below these points, prohibitory duties attach upon importation. From our colonies in North America indeed, corn might be imported without those duties till the price of wheat is below 53s. and that of barley below 26s. the quarter; but, these colonies have in ordinary years quite enough to do to find themselves; and in the best seasons our supply from them is so extremely frivolous, that it has no effect on the market; and this distinction in their favour is, in truth, utterly unworthy of notice, except in so far as it furnishes a very striking additional proof of the

care, with which the most minute interests of all other persons connected however slightly with England are watched over and protracted, while those alone of Englishmen possessing property in our West Indian islands, have of late years been in some cases systematically sacrificed, and in others most grossly neglected. Mr. Baker's alarm presupposes that spirits can be obtained from sugar and molasses at less cost, than from corn; for, otherwise there would be no danger that an ounce of either of the former articles would be substituted in the distilleries in place of the latter. It is also acknowledged, that if our stills did not consume one single bushel of grain, we should yet be obliged to import corn from abroad, to supply a sufficiency of food; and, consequently, that the whole quantity of corn which we distil is purchased from foreigners. Now, why are we to continue thus paying annually to foreign nations a high price for the materials for distillation, when we can obtain for a lower price equally good ingredients, the property of our own subjects, raised on our own land? I can indeed, conceive, that a very timid and jealous landholder might argue this. "I admit that the whole quantity of corn distilled in England is bought from foreigners, and that our own sugar and molasses would give us the same quantity of equally good spirits on better terms; but, notwithstanding this, if we ceased to distil corn, our demand for corn in the foreign markets would be lessened, and the price of foreign corn would also fall; so that, perhaps, foreigners might be able to afford to introduce their corn into this country, even after paying those high duties, which in the present circumstances amount to a prohibition, and if so we must be undersold." To this the answer is short and simple; the present high duties are twenty-four shillings and threepence the quarter on wheat, and twenty-two shillings on barley. Whether any foreign wheat and barley could after payment of such duties be sold in this country for less than 63s. and 31s. 6d. respectively, the quarter, I submit must to persons more masters of the subject than I pretend to be. But, let the objection have the utmost force, that can be demanded for it. I have already fully proved, that as long as we do not grow corn enough to supply ourselves with food, government has the power by *protracting duties* to prevent its price from falling to any point above which it may be thought right to keep it.

To be continued.